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ABSTRACT

The importance of family life on the development of the child has been well documented. In Africa, however, little research has been undertaken to assess the influence that family life and marital status of parents have on child development. It was hypothesized that African adolescents from broken homes would experience: (1) less involvement in informal social relations and organized group activities; (2) less popularity with peers; (3) more personal, social, and disciplinary problems; and (4) more fluctuation in academic performance when compared to peers from homes where two parents were present. To test these hypotheses, 8th and 11th grade students in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia were interviewed. The experimental group consisted of 173 students from broken homes. Students (N=150) from intact families, matched with the experimental group in age, sex, and socioeconomic background, comprised the control group. Data were collected from a questionnaire and sociometric rating scale administered to all students; interviews with instructional staff; and academic records. Overall, the findings indicated that one out of three adolescents attending secondary schools in Addis Ababa came from broken homes. The social and academic profile of these students differed from that of students from intact homes, with the students from broken homes generally at a disadvantage. However, the incidence of broken homes and the magnitude of their effects on aspects of emotional, social, and academic performance varied according to the age, sex, and socioeconomic background of students. (Author/NRB)

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THE EFFECTS OF ABSENCE OF A PARENT ON THE COGNITIVE AND SOCIAL PERFORMANCE OF ADOLESCENTS: RESEARCH RESULTS FROM AFRICA

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ABSTRACT

The importance of family life on the quality of psychological, social, and intellectual development of the child is attested to by studies undertaken in a variety of cultures. Likewise, the effects of absence of one parent from the home as result of divorce, separation, or death on the academic performance and social adjustment of the child has been extersively studied. In Africa, however, very little research has been undertaken to assess the influence that family life in general, and marital status of parent(s) in particular, have on child development.

This study was undertaken to test the hypothesis that adolescents from broken homes experience: 1) less involvement in both informal social relations and organized group activities; 2) less popularity with peers; 3) more personal, social and disciplinary problems; and 4) more fluctuation in academic performance when compared to peers from homes where two parents are present. The subjects were 323 eighth and eleventh grade students from government and private schools in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The experimental group consisted of 173 students from broken homes. One-hundred and fifty students from intact families, matched with the experimental group in age, sex, and socioeconomic background, comprised the control group. Data was collected from a questionnaire and sociometric rating scale administered to all students; interviews conducted with instructional staff; and academic records.

Overall, the findings indicate that the number of adolescents attending secondary schools in Addis Ababa who come from broken homes is considerable - one out of every three students; the social and academic profile of these students differs from that of students from intact homes; and students from broken homes are generally at a disadvantage. However, the incidence of broken homes and the magnitude of their effects on aspects of emotional, social and academic performance vary according to the age, sex, and socioeconomic background of students. The study raises a number of questions and points to areas in dire need of further investigation by educational and social researchers in Africa.

INTRODUCTION

Social scientists in developed countries at different times in their history have commented on the malleability of the family in response to changes occurring in the larger society. For example, the family responded 'appropriately' to the challenges posed by the requirements of industrial capitalist production in the United States with its shift away from a predominance of large extended family groups toward the ascendence of the nuclear family. More recently, in developed countries the nuclear family itself is changing and a variety of alternatives are emerging. Sources at the U.S. Bureau of the Census inform us that one such change is the rapid increase in the number of single parents in general and female-headed households in particular. The significance of this changing family pattern is reflected in the number of studies that have examined its impact on children. Generally, it has been found that when children of single parents are compared to their peers from two-parent families, those from single parent families tend to exhibit lower self-esteem; lower achievement motivation, and lower tolerance for delay of gratification; to demonstrate poorer conscience development, peer relations, and social adjustment; to be more anxious and overly dependent on their parent; and to exhibit a higher incidence of rebellion, juvenile delinquincy, aggressive acting-out, sex-role conflicts, alcoholism, suicide and depression. As adults, children of single parents are more likely to show poor occupational adjustment and career success, and higher rates of unemployment, divorce and marital separation.[2] With respect to the nature and extent of the effects that absence of one parent from the home has on academic performance and cognitive functioning, Shinn points out that methodological problems, contradictory findings, and competing interpretations of available data introduce considerable uncertainty. While the majority of studies she reviewed reported detrimental effects, some well-controlled studies found no effects, and a few reported beneficial effects associated with

paternal absence. Nevertheless, the tentative conclusion seems to be that father absence does not necessarily lead to detriments in academic performance and cognitive functioning, though the probability of detriments in these areas appears higher for father-absent individuals.[3]

Systematic descriptions of population characteristics and trends, such as those provided by the U.S. Census, are sorely lacking in Africa at all levels. The number of children living in households headed by one parent is therefore unknown. However, there is some basis for the hypothesis that the number is significant - particularly when one considers that female-headed households are not new in Africa. Polygamous family systems which consist of one man dividing his time and attention between two or more wives and sets of offspring have existed for a long time. There is also reason to believe that the number may be growing as societies adopt modern laws and customs. There is some evidence for example, that the adoption of monogamy as the only legal form of marriage has left some second wives and their children bereft of the protection, support, and intermittent presence of the father in the home accorded them under customary law. The recent introduction of more lenient divorce laws in some parts of Africa may also contribute to the number of children living in households headed by one parent.

Migration of males from rural areas to mines, plantations, and cities has left many African women with sole responsibility for production, family welfare, and childrearing.[4] Documentation is piecemeal, but there is also evidence to show that the incidence of female-headed households in urban areas of Africa is significant and not unique to one particular region of the continent. For example, results from a study conducted by Schwarz in an urban area of Zaire show that of a sample of 160 women workers in the largest textile factory in the country, only 1.5 percent were married. A few of these women had never been married, but the remainder were either divorced, widowed, or living in short-term 'concubinage'.

These 160 women supported a total of 340 children.[5] Data collected in the 1950s show that 23 percent and 34 percent of the household heads in two suburbs of Kampala were female.[6] In 1977 the number of female-headed households in Mathare, a suburb of Nairobi, was estimated to be between 60 and 80 percent.[7]

Social and economic planners in Africa have stressed the need to develop a trained workforce and the importance of formal education to modernization and development. However, in spite of concerns regarding the quality of schooling and the efficiency of educational systems, studies such as those undertaken in developed societies that examine the relationship between households headed by one parent and variables such as personality, social adjustment, and academic performance of African children are few. Two general studies that address achievement motivation and social adjustment of children in polygamous societies have some relevance. With respect to achievement motivation McClelland hypothesized that "family variations most likely to influence need for achievement in the same way cross-culturally are those in which the father is absent or the son lives with the mother."[8] To test this hypothesis he applied the method of content analysis to folk tales. He found that those tribes with a prevalent pattern of mother-child households scored low in achievement imagery. He concluded that polygamy promotes mother-son households in which the son stays dependent on the mother longer thereby hindering development of need for achievement. With respect to social adjustment of children, one cross-cultural study found that societies with a polygamous mother-child family structure rated higher in both theft and personal crime than societies with a primarily monogamous nuclear family structure. The researcher suggested that such anti-social behavior is a reaction against a female-headed household and an attempt to assert masculinity.[9]

In Ethiopia, where data for this study was collected, the Ministry of Education reported in 1969 that "many children who come from broken homes suffer psychological

and economic difficulties and find it impossible to continue in school for a long time."[10] From case studies of five street boys in Addis Ababa, Captain Demissie Deressa found that four of the five boys took up life on the street following either divorce or death of parents. He concludes that "the existence of street boys can be generally attributed to a breakdown in their family structures and economic hardship."[11] A United Nations study conducted in Ethiopia found that 72 percent of male delinquents came from broken homes.[12]

Writing on the psychiatric morbidity of boys at the state institution for juvenile delinquents in Ethiopia, Giel and Van Luijk reported that "in Ethiopian society, the high frequency of divorce and resulting breakdown of family life force many children away from their home. These vagabond children, mainly boys, tend to drift to the capital Addis Ababa ... often they live in small gangs ... and get acquainted with such vices as gambling and abuse of alcohol."[13] On the other hand, results obtained by the same researchers in rural Ethiopia, show no clear relationship between broken home status and prevalence of behavioral disturbance. Another finding was that children from broken homes and those living away from home were in the top half of their classes.[14] One conclusion drawn by these researchers was that "just as much as the adult Ethiopian seems to be armed against the psychological concomitants of the breaking up of marriage, the Ethiopian child is emotionally sufficiently self-contained to withstand the hazards of an unstable family life."[15] The researchers did not address the fact that these findings and their conclusion conflict with those from their earlier study.

The present study attempts to further our understanding of the relationship of broken home background to selected aspects of academic, emotional and social behavior of adolescents in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

HYPOTHESIS

Males and females in both the early and late adolescent age groups who come from broken homes experience: 1) less involvement in both informal social relations and organized group activities; 2) less popularity with peers; 3) more personal, social and disciplinary problems; and 4) more fluctuation in academic performance when compared to peers from homes where two parents are present.

METHOD

Subjects

The subjects were 323 eighth and eleventh grade students from two government and two private secondary schools in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Students were divided into two groups based on the marital status of their parents. The experimental group consisted of 173 students from broken homes, 88 from the eighth grade and 85 from the eleventh grade classrooms. One-hundred and fifty students from intact homes - 88 and 62 respectively from the eighth and eleventh grades - comprised the control group. Within the experimental and control groups, students were classified according to grade-level; type of school attended, i.e., government or private; and sex as shown below in Table 1. All subjects were of Ethiopian nationality.[16]

Table 1. Number of Subjects in the Experimental and Control Groups According to Grade, Type of School Attended, and Sex

		EXPERIMENTAL					CONTROL					
		Private		Government			Private		Government			
		M	F	M	F	Sub-totals	M	F	M	F	Sub-totals	Total
Grade	8	19	23	15	31	88	19	23	15	31	88	176
	11	18	8	17	42	85	18	8	10	26	62	147
Total		37	31	32	73	173	37	31	25	57	150	323

Subjects were selected using the following method. All students in the eighth and eleventh grade classrooms at two segregated private schools (one male and one female) were administered a questionnaire (see procedures below). Students who reported that they came from broken homes were placed in the experimental group and classified by grade and sex. Likewise, private school students who reported that they came from intact homes were sorted according to grade-level and sex. Students from intact homes were then randomly selected for inclusion in the control group - matched to the experimental group in number, grade-level, and sex. A similar procedure was followed in the two government schools for assignment of students to the experimental and control groups. However, because the total number of students in both the eighth and eleventh grades far exceeded the number in private schools, two classrooms were randomly selected from each grade for administration of the survey questionnaire. Furthermore, of the students in the eleventh grade sample, randomly drawn from government schools, the number who reported that they came from broken homes exceeded the number from intact homes. It was therefore decided to include all eleventh grade students from broken homes in the sample, even though the number in the control group was considerably less.

Procedure

Data on demographic characteristics; and social, emotional and academic performance were collected from 1) a survey questionnaire administered to all students; 2) a sociometric rating scale; 3) academic records; and 4) interviews with instructors as described in more detail below. A pre-test was conducted using ninth graders at the male private school as subjects. A trial questionnaire was administered during a forty minute class period in the absence of the regular classroom teacher. Interviews were also carried out with several ninth grade teachers and a brief check of ninth grade student academic files was made. As a

result of the pre-test, the questionnaire was revised for greater clarity. The open-ended interview technique was maintained as satisfactory, and investigation of the academic files demonstrated their accessibility and appropriateness. It was decided that the regular classroom teacher should be present during the administration of the questionnaire for the sake of effective classroom discipline. Students should be assured that their responses will remain confidential. Finally, the questionnaire, originally written in the English language, had to be translated into Amharic for the eighth grade students in the two government schools due to thier lack of proficiency in English. A description of the instruments and methods used to collect data follows.

Questionnaire. A 30 item questionnaire was devised and distributed to all academic classes from which subjects for the study were selected. One item, marital status of parents, was used as the basis for partitioning students into the experimental and control groups. Those students reporting broken home status were asked to indicate the cause for the break-up - death of one parent, divorce, separation, or death of both parents. Other items in the questionnaire included: a) religious affiliation of respondent; b) social class as determined by occupation of father and/or mother. Those whose parent(s) were servants or unskilled laborers were considered lower class; professional and paraprofessional people, e.g., businessmen, government and military officers were classified as middle class; and diplomats, highest ranking military and government officials, and members of the royal family were counted as upper class; c) parental interest as measured by student perceptions on a four-point scale, and number of hours per week spent with parent(s); d) social participation as measured by number of hours reportedly spent alone, with peers of the same sex and opposite sex, adults - parents and teachers, hours per week engaged in team sports, and number of leadership positions held; and e) daily study time in hours.

Sociometric Rating Scale. A four point rating scale was administered to all academic classes containing subjects in the study. Each student was asked to rate each classmate as either much liked, somewhat liked, not very much liked, or disliked.

Academic Records. Student academic files including semesterly and yearly grades over a three year period were investigated to ascertain fluctuations in performance as shown by the final grade received in each academic subject.[17] A three year period was selected as an adequate measure of a student's degree of stability of performance. A fluctuation of less than ten points was considered mild enough to be termed stable performance; a fluctuation between ten and twenty points moderate; and twenty points and beyond severe.

Interviews with Instructors. Interviews were conducted with each instructor from the two private schools that taught at least one course to students included in the samples.[18] Verbal orientation at the beginning of each interview included the general purpose of the study and such questions as "Which students in your class do you consider to be unusually shy, reserved, highly emotional (easily upset, emotional, or depressed), cause trouble for the teacher by being insolent, oppositional, defiant, and so on?" Using a roster of all students in the class, the teacher and interviewer went through the entire list (to avoid bias), stopping at the names of any student that the teacher perceived as problematic.[19] In each case, the teacher was asked to describe his/her perceptions of the problem, e.g., "she cries even when asked to read aloud in class. She is a big problem - she doesn't talk in clss - she doesn't respond to the teacher - most of the time she spends crying. Girls don't like her because of her quietness. She's always looking down and her handwriting has a nervous look about it," and so on.

Once all interviews were completed, data from the two schools was sorted according to experimental and control group subjects, and non-participants in the

study. The latter were discarded. The next step involved classification of the problems reported by teachers according to whether they were primary personal or social-disciplinary in nature.[20] The problems were coded and sorted according to the following guidelines:

a. Personal Problems. Those describing excess use of defense mechanisms, over-shyness, and other intrapersonal difficulties, e.g., "he denies that he has done something when the teacher catches him," or "she often cries for no apparent reason."

b. Social-Disciplinary Problems. Those involving difficulties in interpersonal relationships with either teachers or peers, e.g., "he tries to make the teacher look bad in front of other pupils." Student does not adhere to rules or challenges the teacher's authority, e.g., "he disturbs the class by talking out and throwing things," or "she quarrels constantly with classmates."

RESULTS

The summary of results that follows is primarily descriptive. A major goal is to stimulate further research concerning the impact of broken home background on the social and academic adjustment of adolescents in African secondary schools. Most of the interpretations offered are speculative and can be looked at as hypotheses deserving more systematic research.

Incidence of Broken Homes

The number of adolescents in the eighth and eleventh grade classrooms included in this study that reported that they came from broken homes was considerable - 33.1 percent. The incidence was 29.5 percent and 37.8 percent for the eighth and eleventh grade classrooms respectively. Of the 239 males in both grades of the government and private schools, 69 or 28.9 percent were from broken homes; the

comparable figures for females were 104 from a grand total of 284 or 36.6 percent. Averaged across grade-levels, more students from broken homes attended government rather than private schools, 44.6 percent and 23.6 percent respectively. Finally, in government schools, the incidence of students from broken homes is greater in the eleventh grade than in the eighth grade for both sexes. The same relationship holds for males in private schools but is reversed for female students enrolled in private schools where the percent in the eighth grade from broken homes (31.5%) is greater than the percent in the eleventh grade (20%).

Reasons Reported for Broken Homes

Table 2 provides a summary of the percent of students who reported that their broken home status was a result of either death of one parent, divorce, separation, or death of both parents. Considering all adolescents in the study from broken homes, the death of one parent was the reason given by the most number of students (38.2%), followed by divorce (34.5%), separation of parents (24.2%), and finally death of both parents (3.0%). The same rank order holds true when responses are tabulated according to various subgroup classifications, i.e., private and government schools, males and females, and eighth graders. However, for the older adolescent group more students reported that separation of their parents was the reason for their broken home status (37.5%), and an equal number (30%) gave death and divorce as the reason. The most notable increase is in the number of eleventh grade students in government schools that attributed their broken home status to separation of parents when compared to eighth grade students in government schools. Whereas no younger adolescent males gave separation as the reason; 46.6 percent of the older adolescent males did. Looking at females in government schools, 13.3 percent in the eighth grade and 45 percent in the eleventh grade gave separation as the reason.

Another marked difference between government and private schools at both grade

Table 2. Reasons Reported for Broken Home by Subgroup, All Adolescents, School Type, Grade-Level, and Sex (in percentages)

	Eighth Grade				Eleventh Grade				Totals						
	Private		Government		Private		Government								
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	Adol.	Priv.	Gov't.	8th	11th	M	F
Death (1)	44.4	39.1	50.0	50.0	58.6	37.5	13.1	22.5	38.2	45.5	38.4	45.8	30.0	42.2	35.6
Divorce	50.0	39.1	35.7	33.3	23.5	37.5	40.0	27.5	34.5	37.9	27.3	38.8	30.0	37.5	32.7
Separation	5.6	21.7	0.0	13.3	17.6	25.0	46.6	45.0	24.2	16.7	29.3	11.8	37.5	17.2	28.7
Death (2)	0.0	0.0	14.2	3.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	5.0	3.0	0.0	5.1	3.5	2.5	3.1	3.0

Note: Percentages were calculated for each sex separately according to grade-level and type of school attended. For example, in the death of one parent row, 44.4% means that of all eighth grade males in the study from broken homes attending private school, 44.4% reported the death of one parent as the cause.

Table 3. Average Number of Hours Spent Each Week by Adolescents Alone, with Peers, and with Adults

		Alone				Peers				Adults			
		Broken		Intact		Broken		Intact		Broken		Intact	
		M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
8	Private	49.1	43.1	59.4	45.9	27.9	30.5	29.7	31.5	9.9	8.8	5.5	8.5
	Government	55.5	19.8	40.4	19.1	27.4	23.4	25.9	23.7	5.1	3.3	9.3	5.2
11	Private	52.1	52.3	43.6	53.5	34.7	41.3	35.5	34.0	6.5	4.7	7.9	4.4
	Government	55.2	28.1	54.6	36.9	25.1	37.2	33.4	44.3	5.3	4.8	4.9	8.5

levels is that all students who reported that both parents were deceased (3.0%) attended government schools. Within the government schools, death of two parents was reported by 14.2 percent of all males and 3.3 percent of all females in the eighth grade; and 5 percent of all females in the eleventh grade. No eleventh grade males from either type of school reported both parents deceased.

Characteristics of Students

Religion. Religious affiliation of participants in the study ranked as follows: Orthodox Christian, 76.5%; Catholic, 7.4%; Christian, 7.1%;[21] Protestant and Moslem, 3.4% each; and other, 2.2%. Within all religions except Moslem, the percent of students from broken homes is greater than the percent from intact families.

Social Class. 90.4 percent of all participants in the study were from the middle class - 88.3% of all eighth graders and 92.5% of all eleventh graders. The middle class is of course not the largest for the country as a whole - the lower class is. However, middle class families are more likely to send their children to school and more able (like the upper class described later) to pay private school fees. Of the total number of private school students, 61.2 percent were from the middle class. More than half (55%) were from broken homes.

Fifteen, or 4.7% of all participants were from the upper class. Of these, eight were male and seven female. 86.7 percent attended private schools; 13.3 percent (two eleventh grade females) attended government schools. The majority (73.3%) were from intact families. No eleventh grade students from this strata were from broken homes.

Sixteen, or 4.9% of all participants in the study were from the lower class. All were enrolled in government schools and equal numbers were from broken and intact homes. Seventy-five percent of the younger adolescents, and 100 percent of the older adolescents from the lower class were male. Although there was no

fee for attending the government schools, gross under-representation of the largest social class in Ethiopia and of females may be due to factors such as the economic/production function of children in lower class families, or perhaps parents in this strata place less value on formal secondary education and school attendance when compared to parents in the middle and upper class stratum.

Parental Interest

Students were asked to rate their perceptions of parental interest in their studies on a four-point scale ranging from parents show no interest to parents show great interest. On average, adolescents from intact homes report more parental interest in schoolwork than those from broken homes regardless of sex, grade-level, or type of school attended. There are several plausible explanations to account for this finding: 1) the most obvious, the single parent is unable to duplicate, in the quantitative sense at least, the attention that two parents can provide; 2) without a partner with whom to divide labor, single parents may, out of necessity, be more preoccupied with subsistence and household maintenance tasks, and economic concerns; 3) there may be more children in broken households compared to nonbroken ones; and/or 4) it is possible that the single parent is also less educated than the son/daughter in secondary school resulting in some sort of inter-generational conflict or a position of 'defensive disinterest' taken by the parent with respect to the educational pursuits of adolescent offspring. The requisite data to test these possible explanations, however, is not available.

Looking at the various subgroups, males in the younger adolescent group rate perceptions of parental interest higher than females. The reverse is true in the older adolescent group - females from both types of home report more parental interest in their schoolwork than males. This may be due in part to the general increased vigilence of parents concerned with the chastity of their daughters as they mature.

Social Participation

Adolescents, regardless of grade-level, school attended, sex, and marital status of parent(s), report that they spend the majority of hours outside of school alone, followed by significantly fewer hours in the company of peers, and even fewer hours engaged in interaction with adults, i.e., parents and teachers (see Table 3). Generally, older adolescents report more time spent alone than younger adolescents; and males spend on average more time alone than females. What they do when alone is unknown and deserves further investigation.

Time Spent with Adults. Overall, students from broken homes report that they spend less time with their parent than their peers from two-parent families. As Table 4 shows, however, the amount of time reported varies as a function of grade-level, school type, and sex. Taken as a group, for example, younger adolescents from broken homes spend an average of one hour less per week with their parent when compared to all younger adolescents from two-parent families. However, within the single-parent group of eighth graders, large differences are observed. Whereas private school students report an average of 14.9 hours - 17.1 and 13.0 for males and females respectively; government school students report an average of 5.9 hours spent per week with their parent - 7.9 for males and 4.9 for females. Less dramatic differences are observed between the subgroups of eighth graders from intact homes. Private school students from two-parent homes report that they spend on average, 11.3 hours per week with parents - 9.2 hours for males and 13 hours for females; government school students report 11.5 hours - 12.7 and 8.8 hours for males and females respectively. Regardless of sex then, students from government schools with one parent report the least amount of time spent with parents. The latter is also true with respect to number of hours that eighth grade students spend with teachers - males and females from broken homes attending government schools spend considerably less time with teachers than their peers in government schools

Table 4. Average Number of Hours Spent Per Week with Parents and Teachers According to Grade-Level, Type of School, and Sex

	Parents		Teachers	
	Broken	Intact	Broken	Intact
Eighth Grade	10.2	11.4	2.8	2.5
M	13.0	10.9	2.6	3.7
F	8.4	11.9	2.9	2.9
Private	14.9	11.3	3.7	2.6
M	17.1	9.2	2.8	1.7
F	13.0	13.0	4.5	3.3
Government	5.9	11.5	1.9	4.5
M	7.9	12.7	2.3	5.8
F	4.9	8.8	1.7	1.6
Eleventh Grade	8.9	10.9	1.5	1.8
M	9.3	10.5	2.4	2.9
F	8.7	11.2	0.8	1.3
Private	9.9	9.1	1.9	1.9
M	10.5	13.1	2.4	2.6
F	8.5	7.1	0.8	1.6
Government	8.5	13.4	1.3	1.6
M	8.1	6.5	2.5	3.3
F	8.7	16.0	0.8	1.0
8th & 11th Grade	9.6	11.1	2.1	2.5
M	11.2	10.7	2.5	3.4
F	8.5	11.4	1.9	1.9

from nonbroken homes and those from both types of homes attending private schools. Private school students of both sexes from broken homes, however, report more student-teacher interaction than their peers from intact families.

Overall, eleventh grade students spend less time with adults - both parents and teachers - when compared to eighth graders. Older adolescents from intact homes spend on average two hours more with parents per week than their peers from broken homes. However, substantial differences are observed in the various sub-groups. Males in private schools fare much better than males in government schools regardless of the number of parents in the home. Private school females, on the other hand, fare less well than their male peers in private school. Little difference is seen between females from broken homes attending either type of school. However, females from two-parent families attending government schools report that they spend an average of nine additional hours with parents compared to both their peers in government schools from broken homes and from both types of home in the private school.

With respect to the number of hours per week spent with teachers outside of regular school time, older adolescents report a fewer number than younger adolescents. There are no discernable differences between students from private and government schools and broken and nonbroken homes, though females in both types of schools from both types of home spend considerably less time with teachers than their male peers. Given that most teachers are men, the latter finding may be attributed to the presence of a cultural taboo that restricts male-female communication. Nevertheless, without the individual teacher assistance afforded the male adolescent, females are at a disadvantage in the academic world.

Time Spent with Peers. Adolescents at both grade-levels report that they spend considerably more hours per week with peers than they do with adults. This is consistent with findings in other cultures. Furthermore, older adolescents

spend more time engaged in peer interaction than younger adolescents. Students at both grade-levels from broken homes spend slightly less time with peers than do students from two-parent families. Possible explanations for this may be: 1) adolescents from broken home may have to spend more of their leisure time fulfilling household responsibilities to compensate for the absence of one parent and/or 2) as will be discussed later, students from broken homes are rated as slightly less popular by their classmates than students from intact homes. Regardless of school attended, younger males from both one- and two-parent families report fewer hours spent with peers of the same sex than females. The reverse is true in the older adolescent age group.

All adolescents in the study report that substantially less time is spent per week engaged in either group or one-to-one interaction with peers of the opposite sex than with the same sex. Segregation of sexes in three out of four of the schools included in the study may partially account for the dearth of heterosexual contact. Younger adolescents report more hours than older adolescents. At the eighth grade level, private school students from both types of home, particularly the females, report that they spend more time in coed groups than government school students. In the government school, males reported that they spend no time in groups outside of school with the opposite sex; females from both types of home report one-half hour per week or less. At the eleventh grade level, students of both sexes from broken homes attending private schools spend more time in group interaction with members of the opposite sex than peers from two-parent families. Government school students reported no time spent in coed groups. This latter finding is consistent with the traditional Ethiopian culture which frowns on mixed-sex groups. That students attending private schools report that they spend considerably more time interacting in coed groups might be explained by the more western orientation of directors and teachers in these schools.

Time spent in one-to-one interaction with members of the opposite sex is likewise meager. However, unlike coed group participation, differences in hours spent per week are greatest between students from broken and nonbroken homes regardless of school attended. Adolescents from homes where one parent is absent spend slightly more time per week in one-to-one relationships with the opposite sex. Given the general cultural restrictions on male-female interaction, this may be a function of adult supervision - the less adult supervision is available, the greater the involvement of adolescents in one-to-one relationships with members of the opposite sex. No distinct differences are apparent between males and females. Young males from broken homes, however, spend more time with a female companion than do older adolescent males. The opposite is true for females from broken homes.

Clubs, Sports, and Other Organized Activities. All adolescents in the study reported that they spend very little time per week participating in sports and other organized social activities. This is true of younger as well as older adolescents, and students from broken homes spend, on average, less time in this category of interaction than those from two-parent families.

That adolescents generally report spending very little time in sports and other organized social activities may be due to the meager facilities and paucity of equipment - particularly in the government schools. On the surface this appears to be a viable explanation since students attending private schools - which are as a rule better equipped - report more participation in organized athletic and social activities than their peers in government schools. However, given the finding that students from broken homes spend less time in this type of activity than students from intact homes, regardless of school type, suggests that other factors may be operating here.

Leadership Positions. Generally, there is little difference between grades in the number of leadership positions held. Adolescents from government schools at both age levels, however, report that they hold more leadership positions than peers in private schools. The number of leadership positions held by younger adolescents does not vary when students from broken homes are compared to those from intact homes. Regardless of sex and school type, older adolescents from intact families report more leadership positions than peers from broken homes.

Popularity with Peers. Much as one would expect among any segment of a normal population, results from the sociometric rating scale completed by all students in the classrooms under study show that most students were well-liked by their classmates. However, analysis of the ratings did show that adolescents from broken homes at both grade levels in government and private schools were slightly less popular than peers from two-parent families. Very few adolescents fell into the disliked categories. Those that did were from both types of home. Females were generally more popular with classmates than males.

Teachers' Perceptions of Problems. Interviews were conducted with each private school instructor that taught at least one course to students included in the sample. The objective of the interviews was to elicit their perceptions of students that they thought had either personal or disciplinary problems. A total of fifteen teachers in the boys' school and twelve teachers in the girls' school were interviewed. Two other teachers in the girls' school, who were either unwilling or unable to cooperate, were given a written checklist. Their responses were added to the twelve others. Because we were unable to elicit cooperation from most of the teachers in the government schools, our study in this particular area of investigation failed in its original intention.[22]

In general, teachers in the private schools report that students from broken homes present more problems than their peers from two-parent families. Differences

between students from the two types of homes are most notable for both males and females in the early adolescent group. Older adolescent males from broken homes were perceived as having slightly more problems than classmates from intact homes. No differences were observed when teacher perceptions of eleventh grade girls from the two types of homes were compared.

Generally, teachers described more problems as social-disciplinary in nature than as personal. Comparing males to females, teachers in the male classrooms perceived more disciplinary-type problems. Teachers in the female private school on the other hand, reported, overall, more personal than social-disciplinary problems. However, at the eighth grade level, the problems of girls from broken homes were more frequently described as social-disciplinary. Eleventh grade girls from nonbroken homes were evenly split between social and personal problems.

Academic Performance

Daily Study Time. The daily study time reported by these adolescents might be considered sufficient by educators. The range is from an average of 1.33 hours per day to three hours. There is no clear pattern of differences between adolescents from broken and intact homes.

Fluctuation in Grades. Contrary to our expectations, adolescents from broken homes showed more stability in their grades over a three year period than those from intact homes. Whether this stability is at a lower or higher level with respect to grade point average or whether it is a function of factors such as aptitude; quality of interaction with parents (since we've found that the number of hours spent with parents is less for students from broken homes); differences in the qualities of students from broken homes that survive to these levels of education; or explainable by differences in achievement motivation cannot be determined from the data collected, though these factors certainly warrant further

investigation. If the critical factor can be narrowed to achievement motivation, findings from another culture may be informative. In Turkey, Bradburn found that father absence was somehow related to high need for achievement. He concluded that under certain conditions father absence may boost achievement, at least in males.[23] Considering Bradburn's findings in relationship to his own findings of an inverse relationship between achievement and father absence, McClelland offered the following explanation. Lowered need for achievement is produced by 1) overindulgence (lack of high standards) particularly by the mother early in the child's life, and 2) authoritarianism in the father, particularly later in the boy's development. According to McClelland, the typical mother-child family follows the first path in which the son is unlikely to develop the high standards of excellence requisite to achievement motivation. The father-present family in Turkey follows the second path in which the son may be exposed to high standards but fails to develop high need for achievement because his authoritarian father stands in the way. It follows then, that "...in Turkey, getting the boy out from under the father's influence should promote his need for achievement so long as it does not occur so early as to promote the development of the mother-child household."[24] It is for this reason according to McClelland that throughout history, national need for achievement levels in father-dominated cultures vary according to the occupation of the father and the outbreak of war. This is based on his finding that sons of sailors have higher need for achievement than other comparable boys, especially in authoritarian cultures, because their fathers are notoriously absent from home for long periods of time and cannot exert the kind of supervision over their sons that fathers living at home can. Likewise, wars temporarily or permanently remove dominant authoritarian fathers from the home, which boosts achievement in the son provided that the mother is not over-indulgent.[25] Though the authoritarian father is found in traditional Ethiopian

society, it is unknown whether this is a plausible explanation for the greater stability in measures of academic performance over time for students from broken homes when compared with their peers from two-parent households. Nevertheless, it is an interesting possibility and one of the few available explanations from the literature.

Summary of Results

Looking at these adolescents as a total group, the results of this study can be summarized as follows: The students come primarily from middle-class families and most of them are Orthodox Christian. The number of adolescents from broken homes is considerable - one out of every three students, and death of one parent was given most often as the reason for broken homes followed by divorce, separation, and death of both parents. Adolescents report that they spend considerably more time alone than with peers, parents or teachers. Participation in sports and other organized social activities is minimal. Most students are liked by their classmates. Teachers report that more problems are disciplinary in nature rather than personal, and the school grades of these adolescents fluctuate more than they remain stable. When students from broken homes are compared to their peers from two-parent homes differences in social participation patterns and academic performance are observed. Students from broken homes are generally at a disadvantage.

Regarding the original hypothesis, only one aspect was not supported by the data, i.e., contrary to our expectations, when compared to adolescents from intact homes, adolescents from broken homes showed more stability in academic performance as measured by fluctuations in grade point average over a three year period. The data lent support to all other aspects of the hypothesis. It was found that as a group, adolescents from broken homes participated less in informal social relations and organized group activities; were slightly less popular with peers; and in private schools where measurement was possible, were perceived by their teachers as

having more personal and social-disciplinary type problems than peers from intact homes. However, as we have seen, there are also important differences that emerge when males are compared to females, when students attending private and government schools are compared, and between younger and older adolescents.

CONCLUSION

Given the descriptive nature of the data presented, no inferences can be made and a decisive answer to questions about the effects that absence of one parent from the home has on African adolescents cannot be given at this time. What the study does show is that in Addis Ababa at least, the incidence of broken homes is certainly high enough to warrant further investigation.

Studies of the family in general, and the relationship of broken homes and female-headed households in particular, to the social adjustment and academic performance of African children and adolescents may significantly contribute to the understanding and resolution of problems of inefficiencies that haunt planners and undermine education development goals. One such inefficiency is the high attrition rate. Is there a relationship between the number of parents in the home and school attendance and attrition? Another problem in African education is the overwhelming number of students in secondary and higher education that pursue social science and humanities fields in spite of the urgent need for persons trained in the technical and applied sciences. Certainly a number of factors are at work here, but might one explanation be that males from female-headed households adopt a feminine global rather than an analytical conceptual style? Findings by Carlsmith and others in the United States show that high school males from early father-absent homes (before age 5) are less likely to follow the male pattern of math score higher than the verbal score on the College Board Aptitude Test and more likely to follow the female pattern of verbal score

higher than the math score.[26]

Other recent evidence from studies undertaken in the United States show that family support networks, including the extended family system of the black subculture and the presence of surrogate adult male role models such as grandfathers, uncles, teachers, and so on may in some way mitigate the detrimental effects of father absence. Students in this study from broken homes, for example, demonstrated more stability in their grades over three years than peers from intact homes in spite of the fact that they also reported less parental interest in their schoolwork and fewer hours in the company of parents and teachers. Kinship and extended family networks in Africa have been described by some as obstacles to economic development. With respect to child development and education, however, it might be that the extended family in Africa mitigates the detrimental effects of a broken home in the same way that it does in other cultures.

We have attempted to demonstrate the need to put studies of the family in general, and the relationship of broken homes to the social adjustment and academic performance of African children and adolescents in particular, on the research agenda. Future studies should incorporate into the design measures of the possible independent and interactive effects of variables such as reason for parental absence, sex of the remaining parent and sex of the child, age of the child when parent left the home, age of the child at the time of data collection, family size and sibling distribution, aptitude level of the child, and differences in sociocultural background and education of parent(s).

In addition to the numerous research questions raised in the body of this report, many other questions need to be raised with respect to the quality of

parent-child interaction in both one and two-parent families in Africa. For example, more needs to known about students from broken homes who are successful and students from intact families that are unsuccessful. The remaining parent in the single-parent household also deserves more study. If it is the mother, how does she cope with her dual role as mother and father-substitute? How does she cope with economic concerns and how much does she rely on children - both male and female - to compensate for the absent parent? What kind of supervision and discipline is she able to provide? What expectations are imparted with respect to education? What support - psychological as well as economic - does she get from family, friends, and the community? What differences are observed when it is the father that remains as the single parent? Studies outside of Africa show that men are more likely to remarry or otherwise find a woman to assist in the upbringing of children. Is this also the case in Africa? Are there different effects when children from broken and intact families in African urban areas are compared to peers in the countryside? Studies such as these are needed to increase our knowledge of the effects on children growing up in single-parent families and to ascertain ways of helping them achieve their full potential.

NOTES

1. The authors are grateful to Sister Mary Mansfield and Mitiku Ashebir of Addis Ababa University for their collaboration in carrying out the field research. Copies of the complete research report are available upon request from Professor Teshome Wagaw, Center for Afroamerican and African Studies, The University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI. 48109.

2. See H.B. Biller, "Father Absence and Personality Development of the Male Child," Developmental Psychology (1970), v. 2, no. 2, 181-201; H.B. Biller, Paternal Deprivation (Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, 1974); E. Herzog and C. Sudia, "Fatherless Homes: A Review of Research," Children (1968), v. 15, no. 5, 177-182; E. M. Heatherington, "Father Absence and Personality Development in Daughters," Developmental Psychology (1972), v. 7, no. 3, 313-326; D. B. Lynn, The Father: His Role in Child Development (Monterey, CA: Brooks/Cole, 1974); C. D. Marino and R. J. McCowan, "The Effects of Parents Absence on Children," Child Study Journal (1976), v. 6, no. 3, 165-182.

3. See Marybeth Shinn, "Father Absence and Children's Cognitive Development," Psychological Bulletin (1978), v. 85, no. 2, 295-324; also E. Herzog and C. Sudia, "Children in Fatherless Families," in B. M. Caldwell and H. N. Riciutti (eds.), Review of Child Development Research (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973).

4. Irene Tinker and Michele Bo Bramsen, Women and World Development (Overseas Development Council, 1976), pp. 28-32.

5. Alf Schwarz, "Illusion d'une Emancipation et Alienation Reelle de L'ouvriere Zairoise," Canadian Journal of African Studies (1972), v. 6, no. 2. Cited by Kenneth Little, "Women in African Towns South of the Sahara," in I. Tinker and M. Bramsen, (eds), Women in World Development, p. 80.

6. A. W. Southall and P. C. Gutkind, "Townsmen in The Making: Kampala and Its Suburbs," East African Studies, no. 9 (East African Institute of Social Research, 1957), p. 89. Cited in Christine Obbo, African Women (London: Zed Press, 1980), p. 90.

7. Nici Nelson, "Dependence and Independence: Female Household Heads in Mathare Valley, A Squatter Community in Nairobi, Kenya" (Ph.D. Thesis, University of London, School of Oriental and African Studies, 1977), cited in Ibid.

8. David C. McClelland, The Achieving Society (New York: The Free Press, 1961), p. 374.

9. M. Bacon, I. Child, and H. Barry, "A Cross-Cultural Study of Correlates of Crime," Journal of Abnormal Social Psychology, 1963, v. 66, no. 4, 291-300.

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11. Demissie Deressa,"A Study of Street Boys in Addis Ababa," Haile Selassie I University, School of Social Work, August 1973, p. 14.

12. Jack Riley, Final Report of the UN Consultant on Social Defense to the Ministry of National Community Development, Government of Ethiopia, "An Evaluation of Male Juvenile Delinquincy in Ethiopia," December 1964, p. 23.

13. Robert Geil and Johannes Nichas Van Luijk, Psychiatric Morbidity in Fifty Remand Home Boys, Addis Ababa, HSIU, 1969.

14. R. Geil and J. Van Luijk, "Patterns in Marriage in a Roadside Town in Ethiopia," Journal of Ethiopian Studies, July 1968, v. 6, no. 2, p. 6.

15. R. Geil and J. Van Luijk, "On the Significance of a Broken Home in Ethiopia," Tropical Geographical Medicine, 1968, v. 20, p. 333.

16. Foreign students and those whose families may have been living in Ethiopia for two or more gernerations but have remained isolated from the mainstream of Ethiopian culture were eliminated. Italian half-caste students were included, however, due to evidence that this group has become assimilated to the local culture.

17. Because no intelligence test scores were available, it was not possible to ascertain whether the students were performing at capacity level, who was an over- or under-achiever, etc. Also, for some subjects, academic files were incomplete. Due perhaps to a more pronounced turnover in the government schools, records for some students were not available at all while others only went back one year.

18. Although professional training should enable teachers to perceive student problems with some accuracy, limitations may include: individual differences between teachers, differences in training and qualifications, nationalities, and attitudes toward specific problem behaviors.

19. In both private schools all but two teachers reported that they did not know the marital status of students' parents, thus serving as a control against possible bias.

20. No attempt was made to differentiate among degrees of problems perceived by teachers.

21. Since the terms Christian and Orthodox are used interchangeably in Ethiopia, these students are probably also Orthodox Christian.

22. The interview technique, successfully employed in the two private schools, proved unsuccessful in the government schools. Teachers were unwilling to discuss student problems. A second interviewer from the research team went to see if the communication block was a function of the interviewer. The second interviewer was also unsuccessful. In lieu of interviews, then, a written checklist was devised for use in the two government schools. However, the majority of teachers did not complete the form. Comparisons were therefore limited to teachers' perceptions in the two private schools.

23. N. M. Bradburn, "The Managerial Role in Turkey: A Psychological Study" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Harvard University, 1960).

24. David McClelland, The Achieving Society (New York: The Free Press, 1961), pp. 374-375.

25. Ibid., pp. 374-375, 405.

26. L. Carlsmith, "Effect of Early Father Absence on Scholastic Aptitude," Harvard Education Review (1964), v. 34, pp. 3-21.